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RE-EXAMINATION OF OUR FARM PROGRAM

by Edna Lonigan

The Government is offering today -- as in the last war -- to guarantee high prices to farmers in return for a single favor, control over what farmers sell.

The Government upsets the farmer's market in wartime, because it can buy at any price. When the war is over, the market is completely unbalanced and the farmer has to sell at abnormally low prices because of the overhanging surplus. Why then should not the Government help the farmer in the transition period?

The difficulty with government "assistance" to farmers in wartime is the same as with all government aid. Economically the government which pays the farmers more than the market price is unproductive, and must get the money elsewhere. The classical method is to dilute the currency. The techniques of today are more refined but the Treasury Department which borrows from the banking system loans "secured" by government bonds, is doing the same thing as the medieval king who chipped a bit of gold from the edge of the coins. The farmers get more dollars but each dollar is worth less.

The political results are even more important. Once the Government starts "helping", it never desists. The "crisis" is never over. That is the weakness which Keynes himself admitted was the great weakness in Keynesian economics. Political leaders who have huge sums to give away soon learn they must convert their machinery for giving into a political machine; otherwise upstarts will try to get into office to control the money. Gradually there develops a struggle among the factions within the party -- the classic Stalin-Trotsky contest for top control.

Control of the Welfare State in any of its forms will necessarily be won by the most ruthless and Machiavellian of the political gangsters engaged in the contest. Today the contest is international. The Communists are the ablest, most ruthless gangsters on the political scene. Soviet experts in power are trying to get control of all the systems of central power in every nation -- of farming, labor, business, finance, government. Political war is cheaper and surer than old-fashioned war.

Not in spite of war but because of it, we must re-examine the machinery for central control of American farming.

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After the First World War American farmers, unlike those of Europe, turned back to the free market. They had a very bitter struggle. Farmers who were debt free were able to manage, but those who had mortgaged their farms to buy land at war boom prices had taken on fixed costs which they could not meet as prices fell.

Congress set up the Farm Board under President Hoover, to buy cotton and wheat to force prices up. It took about half a billion dollars and a few months for the able members of the Farm Board to see that the scheme could never work. Buyers refused to bid scarcity prices when the Government held huge stocks of cotton or wheat. When the Board tried to give away its stocks for foreign relief, they learned that it is costly to "give away" bulky commodities, and that the nations receiving these donations call it dumping.

Every farm program since 1933 has been a variant of the Farm Board program, each representing different ways of letting the Government replace direct buyer-to-seller agreements. All have foundered on the facts the Farm Board discovered. The Government can set a higher price than free exchange will bring -- but there will never be enough takers, and there will always be surplus eggs to smell, potatoes to rot, and wheat to feed the rats. These surpluses cannot with impunity be dumped abroad or given away at home. The farmer pays off his mortgage at the bank -- and takes on a heavier mortgage at the Treasury, while the dollar, and the country, grow weaker and weaker.

We could have saved a great deal of money and time, if we had realized that governments do not need to make an economic success of their economic programs. Their survival rests on political success. The AAA set up a local farmers committee in every farm country, and a network of paid officials connecting them with Washington. The work of these agents was to distribute checks, and to remind the farmer at election time of their benefactor.

Within the Administration there was a fierce struggle for control of this vast political machine. Tugwell like Trotsky lived in a rarefied intellectual atmosphere above politics. He was soon out, and the quiet Wallace sat at the center of the web. Harry Hopkins built the WPA into the machine to control the urban vote. When he was strong enough, he made Wallace Vice-President, where he did not have any checks to give out, and took over Wallace's rural machine. Meanwhile Hopkins, via lend-lease was giving the farmers larger checks than they had ever believed possible, to win the election of 1944. Later the Marshall Plan made it possible to continue the give-away program for farmers in peacetime, and helped the Administration win the election of 1948.

If this sounds sordid, it was.

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III

The Brannan Plan marked a new stage. Brannan proposed that farmers receive protected prices but consumers be allowed to buy at the lower prices of the free market. They would still make up the difference, but in their tax bills, not their grocery bills.

This plan is usually referred to as a farm program, but it is much more than that, constituting a brilliant move to weld the political farm machine to the labor machine. It uses the old dream of farmer-labor co-operation, but differs from the old Populist uprising.

Brannan's support comes primarily from the National Farmers Union and its leader Jim Patton. Their farm organization was founded by the faction within the New Deal which seeks to force the Administration into adopting a "left orientation", to meet every issue by forcing the country farther toward complete collectivism. The Brannan Plan is one part of the design which includes the PAC for labor and the ADA for the middle classes -- the Popular Front.

The purpose of this movement is to fasten the farm groups and the city groups together in support of control of all production by government, and to merge all American money transactions into one huge pool managed by government through control of the price machinery. In this fashion the American people would not realize how much of their economic output was siphoned off, or how deeply their productive system was being undermined.

The blueprint for this subtle revolution was spelled out by Earl Browder in 1944, when he proposed that the American Communist Party dissolve (as it promptly did) and merge itself in a new nation-wide popular movement of farmers, workers, industrialists and financiers. This is the Popular Front for the United States, and the Soviet plotters are still working on it.

We do not, indeed, imply that Brannan, Patton or Chapman are Communist. We know that the Soviet Union does 90 per cent of its work through those who can not or will not recognize Communist strategy if it wears American dress. The rest of us must, however, learn to recognize signs of the Soviet plan even when it has a native appearance. The Communists put thousands of people to work for long hours, searching in our history and literature, for the details which give their plans an appearance of pure Americanism.

IV

American farmers do not want the hand-out state. They have never voted for it. But they do not yet see that the hand which gives them the checks is the hand of the "Popular Front" political machine.

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All the problems of the last thirty-five years are merging into one problem. The question is whether farmers want to live in a free Society or one directed by the masters of power. It is the same question in war and in peace.

The only thing we know about this war is that it will not be in the least like the last two. During the first two World Wars of this century it was possible to give the Government strong powers of compulsion, in order to extract the largest share of output for war purposes. In the third conflict that method of extraction will no longer serve. The nations of the West have been subjected now for thirty-five years (with a brief lull in the United States in the 20's) to the extraction process. If this war lasts thirty years, as well it may, then for 65 years, more than two generations, the extractive forces will have been supreme over the productive forces which were dominant in the 19th century. We shall sink to the economy of the U.S.S.R.

The problem of the second half of the century -- if we want high output -- is to reduce the influence of the political managers and restore the right of producers to follow their own best judgment. That is how England won the Napoleonic Wars, the North won the War Between the States, and we made the decisive contribution to the two World Wars. But there is a price: that is willingness to do without Government aid, willingness to accept the verdict of the free market.

The advantage of market prices is rarely mentioned -- they are the highest prices it is possible to get. We may not like them, but we will never be offered anything better.

It is too early to tell whether men and women reared in a free country but conditioned for years to Government "aid", can throw off the chains which bind them, and start the difficult march back to freedom. We know that, unless American farmers are willing to march the whole long way, the rest of the nation can not do it without them.

We know that, if American farmers are willing to struggle free of the grip of collectivist control, the people of other countries will have a light to guide them. "Humanity with all its fears, with all its hopes of future years, is hanging breathless" on their fate.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events Vol. VII, No. 52

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By Frank C. Hanighen December 27, 1950

TRUMAN: The President cut short his Christmas vacation yesterday, hurrying back to the Capital to attend an important conference with Acheson, Bradley, Marshall and Snyder. Also, the press reports, he wants to get to work on his State of the Union address for the opening of the 82nd Congress.

Now, this curtailment of a period of badly needed rest has caused some worry among Administration aides and members of Congress. The press of decisions which have to be made and a multitude of important tasks has left the mark of fatigue and nervous strain on a man who, it is persistently rumored, has been urged by medical advisers to "slow up". Yet, the only relaxation has been trips on his luxurious yacht, the Williamsburg, and even on these week end outings he has to bring along a good deal of work.

Hence, talk has revived among members of Congress that there should be some sort of informal check on the President's condition of health. The unfortunate examples of Wilson and FDR are recalled, and members feel some way to obviate repetitions of those unfortunate and costly situations should be devised, in view of the present world crisis.

This feeling was reinforced by a report which has not been officially confirmed, but which has circulated rather widely through official Washington. According to some who seem sure that they are correct, the President suffered an accident on the Williamsburg during a trip he took down the Potomac on December 8. These informants assert that during the trip Mr. Truman slipped and fell; but they decline to provide a full account of the circumstances. Those who repeat the tale admit that the fall would not occasion much concern in the case of a younger man, but they insist it is worthy of note because of the President's age. The accident was undoubtedly a minor one and may have had no bad consequences. Nevertheless, members of Congress feel that they should be informed of such matters, if for no other reason than to scotch alarming rumors.

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HOOVER SPEECH: The "re-examination utterance" (December 20) of the former President has obviously had a tremendous effect on American public opinion. The rather weakly defensive attitude of those publicists and officials who took issue with him points to the force of his arguments. Last week's speech restated some of the ideas of his address of October 19 which evoked such promising reactions that another talk was indicated. It is estimated that editorials favorable to this first speech were run by dailies with a combined circulation of 30 million. Meanwhile, other voices had chimed in. Former Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy had made a bid, at Charlottesville, Va., on December 12, for outright withdrawal from Europe and earned much praise for his stand. And Walter Lippman in his column had deployed similar arguments. It is believed that these three men had consulted with each other in the preparation of their expressions of opinion on the subject.

In this column, we have emphasized that Mr. Hoover enjoyed close contacts with high Defense leaders in studying the international military situation. And it should be added, the exchange was mutually profitable, for the military enjoyed the valuable economic advice and knowledge of the former President. Therefore, it is

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not surprising that military men with whom we have talked take a favorable view of last week's address. Not all agree with him entirely, but all approached his suggestions with open minds.

The effect of the speech has been stimulating and provocative among these officers. One who had formerly favored a European army remarked that, if Western Europe failed to respond to the Hoover speech with some definite action it would be folly to put hundreds of thousands of American soldiers in Europe, in dire peril of capture by Russian forces. As captives, our friend warned, they would work in Siberian labor camps, held as hostages to keep Russia free from American atomic attack. Another officer deplored spending billions to re-equip European factories which might become Russian satellite sources of production. Others believed the Hoover speech did not mean complete withdrawal from the defense of Europe, Asia and Africa, pointing out that Soviet hegemony over Africa would deprive us of our principal source of uranium, the Belgian Congo. These officers expressed the belief that a rim of air bases -- they mentioned Britain, Spain, North Africa and Turkey -- would serve as a deterrent to Soviet expansion.

All in all, the Hoover speech has inspired some serious thinking and has finally brought the problem of our defense, which should be a legitimate subject of controversy, out from behind the iron curtain of politics and bureaucracy.

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FRANKENSTEIN OF CONTROLS: Underlying difficulties in reaching a wage ceiling formula in relation to controlled prices become more complex, and seemingly farther from solution, as the Administration moves toward fixed wage and price controls. And unless a solution can be found, and an area of all-around agreement can be established, there is the real prospect of a breakdown in the whole procedure of wage and price ceilings. The Administration is learning, fast, that a controlled economy carries with it a multiplicity of headaches and fully as many vexing problems as may be found in any era of laissez-faire.

Union leaders have balked unequivocally in accepting a rigid wage ceiling. Either a cost of living provision must be included, they say, under which wage contracts may be reopened and wage ceilings may be re-examined, or they will refuse to acquiesce in a ceiling formula. Management spokesmen look upon the ceilings procedure as a meaningless gesture, with wage ceilings under constant attack, and subject to continuing fluctuations and changes in costs of living in various parts of the country. They maintain that any ceiling would be a guide rather than a "freeze", and insofar as rigid price controls enter the matter, a continuation of "the cat chasing its tail".

There can be no "freezing" of wages until prices, or "the cost of living", stops moving upward, Mr. Truman was told by high AFofL and CIO leaders. But management spokesmen countered with the assertion that prices have been moving upward because of the wage boosts since June 25, and that with each increase in wages, their prices would have to move up correspondingly, which in turn would cause a further rise in the cost of living.

Mr. Truman declined to accept the argument of management, and under his pressure, the auto makers "rolled back" their prices of December 1. Many companies say that such "roll backs", applied generally, will put their balance sheets into red ink, and in the long run, entail added costs to the taxpayers in paying for rearmament. It is quite evident that an unbalanced balance sheet is being set up in relation to both prices and wages and rearmament costs. The way out in the approaching era of austerity is clearly in expanded production and reduction in inflation pressures. Therefore, the question has become uppermost as to whether the Administration in its anxiety to control prices and please the unionists on wage controls is

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not setting up a Frankenstein in which austerity will be made more severe, prices more susceptible to "black market" speculation, and wage controls merely a plaything in the hands of union leaders.

The Administration is not moving with certainty and decision in the matter. It is trying to "roll back" prices at the expense of producers, but in the same breath, take a toll of "excess profits" taxes from what it calls undue earnings. Thus the Administration is nakedly attempting to appease union leaders who utter reminders of past election favors (and favors to come), and meanwhile gesture at price controls while shortages in civilian goods begin to show here and there. The outcome would seem to be the creation of a huge bureaucracy along the lines of the late OPA, with production and business divided between "compliers" and "non-compliers", and a multitude of agents and emissaries roving the country in search of violations, omissions and failures in "compliance".

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GOVERNMENT AND RAILROADS: One deplorable aspect of government seizure and operation of the railroads is that top military officials (who operate the roads) are helping themselves liberally, free of all charge, to the very best travel accommodations that the carriers are able to provide. The railroads absorb the costs and losses without reimbursement. In several instances recently, since the carriers were seized by Mr. Truman when threatened with a strike, high Army commanders have demanded and been given private Pullman cars, with a complement of porters, chefs and an ample larder, to haul them around the country. The available evidence indicates that this is all at the expense of the railroads. Since the fare for handling a private car is about $17 a mile, exclusive of the wages of employees, the cost of carrying the Army's top brass in the state and mode of traveling royalty is reaching an astonishing sum. What this sum is, the Interstate Commerce Commission has not seen fit to make public. In fact, the ICC has never made a custom of revealing such statistics in the railroads' operating costs.

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ADA MEETS CHALLENGE: Professor Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., the intellectual heavyweight of the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), has been busy again. He and his associates in the brain trust of this Cozy Corner Club of New and Fair Dealers (including Walter Reuther, David Dubinsky, Francis Biddle and, no doubt, the Widow Roosevelt) have issued a Manifesto on the present crisis. The notion of the group is to prescribe for the country a hair of the dog that bit us. And what a dog! "In this grave hour", it says, "the American nation must penetrate through confusion and hysteria and lay hold on first principles." What are they? "Loyalty to the free world and to our commitments to the UN is the rock on which our Foreign Policy must be founded. . . . The human and industrial resources of Europe . . . must be defended by every available means. . . . Our policy in Asia must be . . . to avoid unlimited engagements on the Asian mainland." (This portion of the Manifesto reads as though it had been submitted to the British cabinet for approval.) But at the same time, "We must do our utmost to maintain the position of the UN in Korea", and "the present crisis reaffirms the urgent and pressing necessity to push forward aid on a much enlarged scale to underdeveloped areas throughout the world. Such aid programs, avoiding the fact as well as the charge of colonization will help check the spread of Communism and create the climate out of which democratic institutions may eventually emerge."

To achieve this version of the ineffable Point IV, mobilization in excelsis of the military and industrial resources of America is immediately necessary. Finally as a garnish, all and sundry are warned that attacks on Acheson "can only serve to divide and demoralize the free nations of the world". This last ought to interest the voters who have been swamping their Congressmen with telegrams demanding Acheson's ouster.

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Book Events

THE SOVIET IMAGE OF THE UNITED STATES: A STUDY IN DISTORTION by Frederick C. Barghoorn. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. $4.00. Reviewed by W. H. Chamberlin.

This is a highly competent study of two interesting and important questions. First, what sort of image of American life, politics, morals and culture does the Soviet Government try to create for its subject peoples? Second, how do these peoples react to this image?

The author's credentials for offering reasonable answers to these questions are excellent. Familiar with the Russian language, he spent several years in Moscow during and after the war as Press Attaché of the American Embassy. He has put in a good deal of research on Soviet publications and on the contents of typical Soviet radio broadcasts.

Obviously it is easier to pinpoint the nature and objectives of Soviet propaganda about America than it is to assay confidently the effect of this propaganda on some two hundred million Soviet citizens. Ever since the political and economic Santa Claus days of the Roosevelt Administration ended, the Soviet official propaganda machine has been working at increasing speed to create the picture of an America despicable in every respect.

The United States in this image of the Soviet press is a land of oppression and poverty, where most of the people live in slums, where the workers are either unemployed or subject to intolerable exploitation if they are employed, where the "peasants" do not have enough to eat, where the prospective destiny of every Negro is to be lynched. The author sees in this frenzied crescendo of defamation a "multi-purpose political weapon".

Among these purposes, in the author's opinion, one is to assure the Soviet privileged classes of ultimate victory over American "bourgeois" democracy; and, another is to console the masses of the Soviet people by trying to demonstrate to them that the lot of their brothers in even the richest capitalist country in the world is worse than their own.

What has been the effect of this propaganda drive? The author is modest and realistic in recognizing the difficulties of being sure on this point. Intercourse between Russians and foreigners has been made extremely difficult. One cannot conduct a Gallup public opinion poll in a totalitarian dictatorship.

However, Mr. Barghoorn cites a number of reasons for believing that the drive has fallen considerably short of its objective. Russians whom he met casually on trips were generally convinced that America possessed a far higher standard of living. They regarded American wartime pro-Soviet films, such as "North Star" and "Mission to Moscow", as "funny" because they showed "Soviet villages, towns, and homes which seemed fantastically luxurious to Russian spectators". Although the Soviet Government certainly made no effort to publicize lend-lease aid, most Russians, according to Mr. Barghoorn, knew of this American help and were impressed by the quality and packaging of the American supplies.

In general, the author believes that it is the Soviet "common man" who has been least responsive to the "Hate America" campaign. There are, of course, fanatical Communists who take their propaganda straight and the Soviet intelligentsia is inclined, along with its Marxist bias, to cherish some of the familiar European prejudices against the American way-of-life.

The author finds the vast majority of the people of Soviet Russia "politically indifferent and apathetic", yet with a real if vague desire for "greater civil liberties and more government respect for the dignity of the individual human being". He offers several interesting suggestions as to how American radio broadcasts can appeal to this mood.

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA RECEIVED JAN 3 '51

By Bertrand de Jouvenel U.S.A. -- December, 1950

ON COMING FROM EUROPE: I have had so little time in this country, especially in proportion to its bigness, and I have left my own so long ago, as it seems in terms of events, that I feel, as it were, nowhere -- away from a familiar scene in which I could endeavor, with no great pains, to ascertain the true meaning and real weight of declarations and decisions.

While at the present moment I see France indistinctly because it is so far, and the United States indistinctly because I am once more a newcomer to them and they are so big, what is least blurred is the overall international situation, so vast that it looks the same from whatever point one looks at it. There are aspects of it, nonetheless, which strike me more forcibly, due to my displacement.

For instance, it becomes quite clear that whatever the spiritual kinship and the community of aims between the United States and Continental Western Europe, they cannot possibly react in the same manner to the growing shadow of war. The American can think of "going to war", a prospect which holds no terrors for a brave man. To a Continental European the prospect is of war coming to him, of the enemy disposing of his dependents. Such a prospect should, no doubt, fire the men with a boundless determination to turn back the invader: Western Europe is no more open than was Sparta, the City Without Walls, which never saw the campfires of the enemy. But, in fact, such a grim vision inclines many in Europe to seek peace at all costs.

It is to be noted that in modern times a nation must fight as a whole or it can not fight in the battlefield. For every nerve and muscle of a nation is brought into play by war and the weakest spots determine the efficiency of the whole. Therefore, the retrieving of unity within the several European nations, and their welding together into a greater unity, condition the efficiency of defense in Continental Western Europe. Given a little time, this area would recover the capacity to sustain itself, and it has the resources which would ensure its security without any call to American help. It follows that gaining time is naturally the main concern of European politicians.

To a representative of Europe, the question of ultimate victory (if the conflict should come) is not much in doubt, but at the same time is not of cardinal interest. What he wants to avoid, what his people demand that he should avoid, is the Occupation. How much more this is to be feared than the atom bomb is something the Americans have no means of understanding. To us it is surprising that they should feel such horror of the bomb. After all, the difference between death by the "A" bomb or what is drolly called the "conventional" bomb, can be presumed to be slight. But the enslaving of one's family -- that looms as the greatest peril.

No doubt the German unwillingness to arm is due in part to the quite natural feeling that, since they are needed in the West European army, they should avail themselves of our necessity to improve the political status of their country. But probably many Germans also feel a real fear of bringing upon themselves a preventive Russian occupation. This is perhaps not the time to look back. But what a policy! It has left the core of Europe bare and open, so unprotected that Europeans hardly dare to pick up a weapon!

When comparing this situation to others in history, it is well to keep in mind that the process of arming has become very slow and the march of armies very swift. Gone are the times in which a people could make itself ready for defense while the invader slowly tramped forward. Industrial progress has endowed the invader with

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great speed while it subjects rearmament to the round-about methods of a highly advanced kind of production. It would seem to follow that, on a given land mass, a well armed Great Power could at will overrun its lesser and unarmed neighbors.

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DISASTER IN KOREA: I find it is feared here that the military mishap in Korea may have hurt American prestige in Europe. Nothing of the kind. It is well known that the U.S. had no interest in Southern Korea, that its generals had pronounced it indefensible. The American action was taken only under the provocation of North Korean violence, in obedience to the principle that aggression must be put down, at the request of the European powers eager that aggression should not this time be allowed to proceed unchecked, and against the express advice of the American military. The defeat has surprised nobody in Europe; indeed this column long ago expressed the European forebodings. It is appreciated that the American troops have done wonders in the most adverse conditions.

Admittedly Korea has been a disaster; but surely only a disaster in miniature. It's been a small campaign. The American army has been beaten; but how big an army? A tiny one by any standards. However, it is remarked that this is the major part of American forces! This fact is a cause for wonder; that there are so few American forces, not that these few suffered a defeat.

* * *

MISTAKES: It is said that Winston Churchill in a political broadcast at the end of World War II, after proclaiming emphatically: "This time we shall not make the same mistakes!" added sotto voce: "We shall make others." The Western powers have been fearful of making the mistake characteristic of the thirties, first committed when Japan acted aggressively in Manchuria, repeated by Italy in Abyssinia, and so on: the mistake of filing purely verbal protests unsupported by any action. It has been repeatedly underlined that in this way the system of collective security was undermined, and that Germany was encouraged to improve upon the sins of her forerunners. The concern not to fall into the same error was presumably the main motive of the Korean venture.

It was pointed out in this column that the conditions existing in the early thirties do not exist in 1950. Twenty years ago there was not only a legal but also a moral society of nations. All members had the same general principles. Any one of them which violated these principles by committing aggression would feel his guilt if condemned by the others and if the latter proved the vigor of their feelings by backing the denunciation with arms. Under such conditions it could be expected that the mere appearance of international forces would frighten the aggressor away. The possibility that the international forces might be defeated was given no thought; it was expected that they would not even have to fight.

This column has noted that the conditions are very different today when there exists not one society, but in fact two societies of nations, which have no principles in common, and to one of which the things we condemn seem excellent and laudable. Under these quite different circumstances, there would be moral and eventual material support for the aggressor. Action against him could not be regarded as a simple police operation, but as a marginal conflict of two worlds.

This, unfortunately, is exactly what has come to pass. We can learn from it. We are not in such a position that the full concert of powers will agree to put down aggressions themselves. Now it is a situation in which two worlds confront each other, with a number of marginal operations possible, which may be undertaken by minor elements of the adverse world backed by the full force of the whole. Conversely, it is plain that if the available forces of our world are both small and promised to the defense of any margin attacked by the enemy, these forces can be

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kept running to successive points chosen by the enemy in his own time, or made the victims of carefully prepared ambushes. It is evidently unwise to have the clanging fire engines of the American army rushing as it were, wherever the Russians choose to light a fire.

* * *

ALTERNATIVES: What, however, is the alternative? Is it to restrict American and Western interest and eventual succor to such areas where attack is difficult and defense at an advantage? I am referring to regions which are not accessible to the Russians or their allies, and to such land positions which either because of nature or local efforts might at least serve to gain time for the intervention of those who would help them. Such a decision may seem well-founded. But it would imply the giving up of Southeastern Asia and very probably of Continental Europe. Whether such losses would not be disastrous is surely to be pondered with care.

If such a strategy is not adopted, then what is to be the alternative to the holding (in principle) of a long ribbon across the world? It might well be the placing of Western forces in positions from which they would exert a threat against the opponent, where they would stand ready -- not to block his blows wherever he chooses to hit -- but to return them at the most sensitive points. Naturally, it would be in accordance with this policy if we took up positions in the Near and Middle East with considerable forces.

Of course, should the West bind itself to retort by action of its own in case of inacceptable action by the other camp, we might well find ourselves in a full-scale war. But there is not the least necessity of so binding ourselves. No more tragic and fateful decision can be taken than that of involving one's country in a war. It is wise to reserve this decision to the last moment and not to commit oneself in advance to fight in this place or that place. For the latter policy results in handing over to your very enemy the chief attribute of your own sovereignty. I know that many eminent and learned people regard it as a powerful instrument of policy on the part of the peace-loving peoples to make known in advance what they shall regard as a casus belli: I beg to disagree. Such statements may frighten off those to whom they are made; but they can also entrap those who make them.

* * *

WHEN THE SLEEPER AWAKES: Nothing would be more valuable to us than to know what is going on in Kremlin minds. It is something at which we can only guess, and it may well be a bad guess. However, let us try to think ourselves into the part of a Politburo member. What does he say to himself? Here is my version, without any guarantee:

> "We do not want war. War is very destructive and we take pride in building up our country, a thing we find difficult. It is much more difficult for us than for Americans; hence we are very much averse to destructions. Nor do we need war as an instrument of our national policy. It is plain that we are politically unsuccessful in the West where people value individual freedom. We are more successful in the East where authoritarian methods are more traditional; where the lack of progress by other methods may turn minds to our own methods; last and chiefly, where we can use to the full what has been found to be the greatest political lever, nationalism.
>
> "We seem to be winning the political competition for the undeveloped areas of the world. And therein are to be found the human and material resources to tip the world balance of power in our favor. If we can get Asia solidly on our side and then seep into Africa, we shall be in a fair way to achieving in Stalin's words 'the replacement of the Capitalist encirclement of the Socialist Society by the Socialist encirclement of the Capitalist Society'. This purpose can be achieved

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without a major war and will make our side so strong that we shall hold the whip hand. Therefore we are quite authentically against war.

"But now the Americans have been aroused. No one knows better than we do how powerful a nation they are. They seem decided to go all out for war preparation. They say that is because we have offended their sense of right. We, of course, think that this is Capitalism at bay turning to violence. They presumably want to stop us, which (we believe, and presumably they believe also) they cannot do without a war. They then are going to fight us. And for that purpose they seek to rearm the only nation we fear in Europe, Germany. How can we allow them to build up a mighty instrument of war with the use of a good bridgehead in Europe? If they go all out in an armaments race, we have not, within the part of the world we control, the equipment or the skill to build up as much as they shall. The balance of military force is then going to alter in their favor until we shall be in great danger.

"It would, therefore, seem that we must take away from them the bridgehead they might use against us, and add to our industrial equipment that of Western Europe, with the skills to be found there. If we do this, we shall be in a position to build our strength to any level of military force the U.S. may wish to set. We can do it now. In two or three years it might be too late. In fact, they tell us that it is their purpose to build up their own and a Western European force, and that it will take two or three years. Does it not follow that we must act now?"

This is a mere guess. It may well be a bad guess. But at least it is made in good faith. That is really what I imagine a Bolshevik may think. If I have slandered the Politburo, it is by no fault of my own: they give us very little pointers to their thoughts while ours are quite clear to them. If the guess is a good one, it would follow that Western talk of rearmament far and above what is actually done has a provocative influence, but of course this is the only way things can be gotten under way in regimes of public opinion. It would also follow that whatever the desirability of German rearmament (and readers have found it advocated in this column ever since it was published), now may not be the best time to press it with more publicity than concrete accomplishment. The Russian warnings on the subject are very pressing. A Chinese warning about the crossing of the 38th parallel was disregarded not without evil consequences. We want to rearm Germany for reasons of expediency. Should this result in the overrunning of Western Europe, it would turn out to have been a very inexpedient move. There is today in the United States a most admirable spirit of refusal to yield on any moral issue. But German rearmament is not a moral issue. I would very much like to see the American troops taken out of Korea, the French out of Indo-China, and a concentration of forces accomplished in Western Europe before we pressed the issue of German rearmament.

Another point on which I would like to say a word is the idea I find among Americans that they are going to be bombed. I find it difficult to imagine. Surely Moscow must wish to discourage Washington from challenging the former's progress on the Eurasian continent. Even after an outbreak of war Moscow would (or so it seems to me) try to demonstrate to the Americans that the United States cannot keep or regain a footing on the Eurasian continent and that after all whether Moscow dominates Europe or not does not matter so much to the United States. It would completely go against this policy to exasperate American opinion by bombing Americans at home -- a move, moreover, the Russians might not find so easy. This supposition is predicated on the idea that war does not kill off political thinking in Russia, as, in my opinion, it unfortunately did in the Western democracies in the last war: and that, incidentally, is just what we are paying for today.

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